

Practice Active Listening

Active listening is making a conscious effort to hear, analyze, assign meaning to and respond to what another person is saying. Successful active listening can be exhausting, but will help build confidence that you care about what's important to your members.

Steps to becoming an effective active listener include:

- ***Focus on the Speaker.*** Establish—and keep—eye and face contact with the speaker. Reinforce what is being said is being heard through non-verbal facial expressions. To paraphrase an old saying, good listeners are like poor boxers: they lead with their faces.
- ***Use Receptive Language.*** Follow and encourage the speaker's train of thought by using receptive language; e.g., "I see," "Hmmm," "Un huh," etc.
- ***Listen for Key Words.*** It takes continuous action to focus on the essence of the information being shared. The listener's mind should be actively gathering, sorting, sifting, evaluating, synthesizing, and ordering the data.
- ***Respond.*** Verify with the speaker about the essence of what was said, especially if the thought is being captured on a flipchart or electronically for future reference. Ask questions for clarity but be cautious that the questions are not leading. Never, unless expressly requested, give an opinion on the presented information.